

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from March 11, 2004
Mercer View Community Center
Mercer Island, WA**

Commissioners Present: Judy Duff, Michaela Blakely, Ewing Stringfellow and George Irwin

Commissioners Absent: Roger Calhoon

Incoming Commissioners: Jason Roetcisoender, Dick Gradwohl, Nancy Hutto, Gaylia Bullock, Grant Davidson, Ben Kodama, and Bob Tidball

Former Commissioner guests: Tom Quigley, Martha Goodlett, Bill Knutsen and Karen Kinney

Staff: Judy Herring, Eric Nelson, Steve Evans, Laurie Clinton, King County (KC) Dept. of Natural Resources Agriculture Programs; Sylvia Kantor, WSU Extension KC

Guest Agency Staff: Dave Marks, Manager KC Fairgrounds

Guests: Ann Mack, Dave Duff and Blake Johnston

Chair Judy Duff called the meeting to order at 4:07pm. She began by requesting approval of the agenda with two changes - to have recognition from 4:40 to 4:50 and then break and to move approval of minutes to follow approval of the agenda.

Motion 01-0304 Michaela Blakely made the motion to accept the agenda as amended and Ewing seconded. Motion passed.

Motion 02-0304 Made and seconded to accept the minutes as posted. Under discussion the request was made by Judy to include Karen Wolf, KC Executive Office staff and Paul Reitenbach, Dept. of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) under those present from guest agency staff. And to change Karen, to Karen Wolf in Comp. Plan discussion to distinguish between Ag Commissioner Karen Kinney and Karen Wolf. Laurie requested a change in the Public Comment section under Maxine Keesling's comments to change the south to southerly, change that she had mentioned that she had a docket request from 2002 and 2003 to have the rural zoned land removed from the APD and her docket was separate from the Alliance Church zoning request.

Motion 03-0304 Michaela made the motion to accept the minutes as amended and George seconded. Motion passed.

Judy said how pleased she was to see many new faces as well as many familiar ones. She requested everyone offer his or her introductions from around the room. The incoming Ag Commissioners are: Ben Kodama, retired commercial greenhouse flower grower for 44 years; Bob Tidball, strawberry farmer from the Kent Valley; Nancy Hutto, owner of Snoqualmie Valley Honey Farm in North Bend; Jason Roetcisoender, dairy farmer from Duvall; Grant Davidson, manager of both the Woodinville and Kirkland Farmer's Markets; Gaylia Bullock, purebred sheep farmer in Enumclaw; and Dick Gradwohl, miniature cattle farmer from Covington.

Judy thanked everyone and welcomed them. She acknowledged there was quite a group of people in attendance who have worked for agriculture in the county, and those who will continue to work.

Commission Roundabout (current & incoming)

George Irwin announced that the NW Junior Livestock Show and the NW General Livestock Show in Puyallup will be the 3rd week in April. 4-H and FFA kids from all over western Washington participate, including quite a few from King County. It's a large terminal sale where the kids bring their livestock to show, sell at the auction, then they receive their sales money from their project, and the purchaser receives the end product, which is the meat. He also mentioned that prices are very good for the beef industry with prices approximately thirty percent higher than this time last year.

Ewing Stringfellow said he is busy on his Christmas tree farms planting trees, controlling weeds and preparing to fertilize at the end of this month.

Gaylia Bullock told about two sheep events both occurring at the same time – the NW Jr. Livestock Show and Shepherd’s Extravaganza. The Extravaganza provides a direct market of purebred stock for youth and the general public and also a sale of fleeces.

Bob Tidball reported on a call he received from Bob Royer, a consultant to the Farm Credit Administration (FCA). Mr. Royer is doing a study on what the FCA should do to change their rules in order to help the small, young or new farmer. Judy suggested putting it under new business if the Commission wanted to discuss ideas on responding to this request. Bob said this study is an outgrowth of the USDA’s “listening post” event held in King County several years ago. It’s sort of a glacial approach to helping farmers but apparently they did listen to some of the comments.

Commission Business

Chair report: Judy reported that the letter discussed at the last meeting for support of the private stewardship grants program was written and mailed as agreed. She also mentioned the upcoming Western WA Ag summit on March 23rd in Mt. Vernon. Judy also reported that on Monday there would be a Puget Sound Fresh reception with Executive Sims and Executive Aaron Reardon from Snohomish County.

Staff report:

Laurie reminded everyone about the upcoming Small Farm Expo on March 27th in Enumclaw. She asked everyone to please note there would not be an April meeting because of the Ag Commission Orientation. While this Orientation is geared towards incoming members, it is also very helpful as a refresher course for current and past Ag Commissioners. Laurie then passed around the information for the 3rd Western WA AG Summit in Skagit County March 23 that Judy had mentioned. She encouraged current and incoming Commissioners to attend if possible. These meetings provide the opportunity for Ag Commissioners from various counties to talk about common issues and their impacts and explore ways to work together.

Laurie handed out copies of a set of questions sent from Dick Carkner, Pierce County Advisory Commissioner, regarding how to influence policy at state level. The Pierce County Ag Commission is hoping to develop a regional approach. Most everyone had received these via email, but Dick had asked Laurie to please remind everyone the importance of responding. Judy asked that Commissioners, and potential commissioners identify themselves as either seated or a potential commissioners but specify they are not speaking for the Commission.

Public Comment No one chose to speak.

Recognition of Outgoing Ag Commission Members

Judy began the recognition on behalf of the Commission and staff for the outgoing Commissioners. She acknowledged the overall tremendous efforts of all past Commissioners. The effort by these agriculture activists has been a tremendous boost and created a strong agriculture support mechanism for King County.

Judy invited the members up individually to thank them and present them with a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Executive Sims and County Council Chair Phillips.

She commended Martha Goodlett for her outstanding job as Chair of the Land Use & Regulatory Committee conducting meetings and presenting the committee’s recommendations to the whole commission. Her excellent grasp of county process was evident throughout her term when dealing with complex Comprehensive Plan, land use and code issues. Martha replied that she had a great time being on the Commission. She said she hopes the incoming Commissioners enjoy their terms and feel like they’ve made a difference when they are finished.

Judy recognized Karen Kinney for her expertise in Farmer’s Markets and how valuable that has been especially in making recommendations concerning county code and its revisions. Her patient review of the KC County Comprehensive Plan in regards to Farmer’s Markets also provided valuable insight for the

Commission. Karen told the Commission how much she enjoyed serving and working with this great group. She encouraged the incoming members to have fun and to realize there's a lot of opportunity to really influence what is going on and make their own personal mark.

Judy then called upon Bill Knutsen to list his many contributions to the Commission. He spent a lot of time on code issues and was actively involved with the Agriculture Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP). Bill's level-headedness and common sense approach to problem solving was an invaluable asset to the Commission. Also his willingness to participate in many forums has provided the County with invaluable insight and a great deal of important information. Bill said he seconded what Karen and Martha said and reminded everyone there is a lot for agriculture to accomplish. This is a very transitional time and there are a lot of things changing. There is a lot of opportunity to influence the direction the rural areas of King County go.

Judy recognized Tom Quigley as an excellent outgoing Chair, as well as Commissioner. She spoke about his easy even temper that makes everyone comfortable and enabled the Commission to work well through very difficult issues. She noted his efforts as a strong advocate for the support of Washington agriculture. Tom effectively articulated the importance of working with farmers with from both sides of the state. This was his strong message as a Commissioner - that it's not just Puget Sound, it's not just western, but it's eastern Washington farmers as well. He led the Commission in realizing the importance of educating people about farming so that they understand the intricacies in order to appreciate their food source. Tom said it was his pleasure to be involved with the interview process for the incoming commissioners. He is very excited about the talent they will bring to the Commission. Regarding his time on the Commission, he thinks he has taken far more from being involved with this commission than what he contributed to it and he hopes the same for all on the Commission.

On behalf of the Commission and staff Judy thanked them all and extended the invitation for them to please stay involved with the Ag Commission. Their expertise is invaluable and would continue to be an asset.

10 min. break

Public Outreach Ideas

Laurie asked if Commissioners would like to have a spot for the Ag Commission at the Small Farm Expo (SFE). She said she would prepare a small sign and have the Ag Commission brochures in with the Puget Sound Fresh display. If any Commissioners, current or incoming, would be able to attend it would be very helpful in deciding how to have a large and effective presence in the WSU Agriculture Booth at the Enumclaw Fair which is July 21st – 25th. Judy said she feels as the chair that a strong presence is needed. Everyone has done remarkable work on this commission and some of the work that remains to be done is letting people know that we exist. It was agreed to talk specifically about the KC Fair plans at the May meeting.

Laurie provided details about the upcoming Orientation. The tentative date is Tuesday, April 20th, from 9:00 – 4:00pm, in either Carnation or Preston. This is a very long day and staff knows what an imposition it is for people but it is the best way to provide information on programs, policies and history of KC agriculture to provide a background for Commissioners as they begin their terms. It is also useful to current members for a refresher.

The next big issue for the Commission is where to hold meetings for the next year because the Mercerview Community Center will be torn down to build a new facility. The May meeting will be the last one for quite some time. Commissioners discussed various venues for future meetings. Commuting difficulties such as traffic patterns and rush hour were also addressed. There was general consensus that the I-90 Corridor was good for most everyone. Trying to get a building without a fee was also mentioned as desirable.

Motion 4-0304 Michael moved that the possibility of the Fire Station or Fish Hatchery in Issaquah for the meetings be checked into and then see what's the best alternative. George seconded.

There was discussion on exploring the possibility of having meetings in several different areas in the county, as long as advertising gets into local papers. The benefits of rotational meetings such as increased visibility of the Commission and providing more opportunities for farmers to attend and share their concerns was also addressed. The Chair asked for all those in favor of the motion. **Motion passed.** Laurie was instructed to inquire about various meeting places at her discretion and report back what is available. Laurie asked the Commission to consider holding a July meeting and have it in Enumclaw during the Fair.

Laurie began the discussion on having the Commission consider extending the meetings by one-half hour. Her suggestion was to extend meetings to 2 ½ hours, not to add anymore to the meetings other than the reports from WSU, KCD and FSA, and to allow a little more time for discussion on serious issues. Up until about two years ago the Ag Commission meetings were from 4pm - 8pm. Since four hours can be a very hard and long meeting, the hours were changed to 4 – 6pm. The premise was to lessen the regular monthly meeting time and have commissioners make sure they met once a month at their committee meetings to accomplish a little more work at the committee level. Michaela came on the Commission when the meetings were four hours long. She said they were too long, but feels that two hours is not long enough. She finds it extremely frustrating to be in the two hours time frame because enough time is never spent on the issues. The difficulty of fitting matters into two hours and not having ample discussion time on serious issues was talked about in depth. There was discussion on times and it was generally agreed that trying a three-hour meeting would be good. Michaela talked about how having the committees meet at a different time during the month does work well so that issues that demand it can be thoroughly discussed and analyzed. There was discussion on the availability of county staff for evening meetings and staff responded that while that was very thoughtful, it should not be a factor in the Commission's decision. It is part of staff work programs to attend evening meetings. There was lengthy discussion on what hours work best for Commissioners as well as for the public with agriculture interests. Trying to determine what time works best for farmers is not easy and great consideration was given to their time constraints. Another concern was the ability for meetings to be extended at any given meeting if there was more time needed for discussion on an issue. Many meeting rooms require specific ending times, so there is not always flexibility. This will be looked into when finding other meeting rooms.

Laurie was asked to prepare a form with three different time slots for the May meeting. This will be passed around for everyone to vote on since the incoming members were not official at this meeting. It was also generally agreed that while the meetings will be extended to three hours, they will only last as long as necessary and not be required to go for three hours.

Commission Business continued

Staff Report: Sylvia reported that WSU Small Farms Program had a retreat last week and one of the things they decided to do is to put together a two-day conference focusing on value added regulations. If anyone is interested in helping shape that conference Sylvia asked that they please contact her. She also wanted to be sure the Commission is aware of a relatively new program at WSU called the Farm Family Support Network, it's funded by a USDA risk-management agency grant and it provides three confidential farm visits that include financial planning and stress management.

Old Business

Judy started the conversation about the Ag Commission grant closeout. She said the community was notified about the grants available to different constituencies within agriculture communities. Laurie reviewed what had been done for this last grant round to use up the final \$13,500. The original plan had been to make the decisions on awarding the grants at the March meeting. But, due to schedule conflicts and timing of Ag Commissioners leaving and new ones being appointed that date had to be changed. She asked the Commission for their recommendation on how to proceed. There were questions on how the funds can be awarded. The funds can be awarded all to one applicant or could be split up between several

or all. It is up to the discretion of the Commission. Final approval would be by the Director of DNRP, Pam Bissonnette, but in the past all grants selected by the Commission had been awarded. There was discussion on the approval process. Steve told about how it was done previously. The Commission liked the idea of having the presentations before the full Commission. There was consensus that since the May meeting is full, the applicants come to the June meeting and do a 3-5 minute presentation, allowing an hour in all. There was also a brief discussion on the recusal process because three members will be recusing themselves. Laurie will get the information on procedure. It was decided to plan for presentations and committee formation at the June meeting and then have the committee come back with a grant award recommendation in July for Commission approval. Laurie also let the Commission know about one grant applicant that did not get the application in on time. The organization's representative questioned why they were not allowed to be included. Laurie explained the timeline to him again, which is the one that was mailed to everyone with the grant closeout notification. She asked for the Commission's opinion and they agreed that there could not be exceptions.

New Business

There was continued discussion on Bob's conversation with the consultant doing the Farm Credit Administration farmer loan study (from the Roundabout session). Bob said there aren't any details at this time. He is waiting to hear more from Mr. Royer so he'll know how to respond. He does know they are looking for suggestions how they can change their policy to better support the small farmers, the beginning farmer and the young farmer. It would come in the form of policy that goes down to the lending institutions. There was more general discussion on the difficulty of getting loans, what institutions are currently favorable to farm loans and Small Business Administration classes on business planning. Bob will let the Commission know when he hears back about the FCA study.

It was suggested that future agenda items include hearing about this study and farm loans as well as another on insurance.

Laurie brought forth a situation occurring on farmland just inside the Snohomish County border, at the north edge of KC Agriculture Production District. Staff wanted to bring it to the attention of the Commission. It appears that a large former dairy farm has been purchased for wetland banking mitigation in Snohomish County. Jason explained what he knew about the project and described the farming area including the types of farms and the drainage systems. Staff feels that setting a meeting with Snohomish County staff to look at what is being done would be helpful to get assurance that KC Farmland is protected. Judy Herring wrote one letter on behalf of the KC Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) to express concern and made the request for input and discussion on the project. She feels that a letter from the Ag Commission would also be very helpful. Judy Herring said she would draft the letter for the Chair to sign. Discussion continued on the possible impacts. While all the specific details of this project are not clear, such as if the land has actually been purchased and if the construction schedule has been determined, it was agreed that the sooner Snohomish County and the developer start getting questioned on the project's potential negative impacts to King County preserved and designated agriculture lands, the better the chance they will address this issue.

Motion 05-0304 Ewing called for the question. Michael seconded. Motion passed.

Motion 06-0304 George made a motion to send a letter immediately to Snohomish County requesting a meeting as soon as possible for KC Agriculture Program staff, Snohomish County staff and the developer of the wetland project to look at the concerns with this project. Ewing seconded. Motion passed.

George said he had been contacted the chef at WSU. He is looking for a list of west side organic producers and the months their produce is available. They are trying to serve local produce as much as possible. Steve will provide him with a list of list of current organic and certified natural producers.

Meeting adjourned at 6:11pm.